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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 3 October 1990, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. de MARCO	(Malta)
later:	Mr. AFONSO (Vice-President)	(Mozambique)
later:	Mr. de MARCO	(Malta)

- Address by Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania
- Statement by the President on the unification of Germany
- General debate [9] (continued)
- Address by the Honourable Tofilau Eti Alesana, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Western Samoa

Statements made by

Mr. Manglapus (Philippines)
Mr. Jeszenszky (Hungary)

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- Address by the Honourable Father Walter H. Lini, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

Statement made by

Mr. Sipraseuth (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

ADDRESS BY MR. ION ILIESCU, PRESIDENT OF ROMANIA

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of Romania.

Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Ion Iliescu, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President ILIESCU: It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly of the United Nations for the first time. I have come bearing a message of friendship and solidarity from the people of Romania. Indeed, I feel at home here, in this family of nations, pursuing the same goals of peace and co-operation, aimed at bettering the lives of individuals and communities. In this endeavour, we are fully convinced, Mr. President, that under your guidance the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly will be able to meet the historic challenges with which we are faced in these times of change. I should like to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish you every success.

Romania is fully committed to the ideals of the United Nations. More than ever, we now understand how dangerous isolation is, how contrary to our people's interests were the former tendencies to surround us with a barbed wire fence of false ideas and assumptions. Those old policies in Romania were skilfully designed to push us backwards, and to cut short our aspirations to human dignity and freedom. Nothing is more important than freedom. There is no reality that has more obviously been at the basis of mankind's efforts through the ages than freedom. We know this all too well in Romania and we cherish the idea that freedom

(President Iliescu)

is the only ground in which all the other aspects of a truly dignified human life can take root. Freedom gives sense to democracy that more than fulfils the aspirations of the majority. It gives rights to minorities and to those who dissent as well. This is how we now think and feel in my country and what we work for. At the same time, we know how far we are from truly implementing these values in our political and social life. The heavy heritage of the former dictatorial régime still hinders our efforts. Disunity and mistrust, lack of a civil society and education, the total destruction of the social framework, the erosion of the status of public servants, the loss of dignity of the working man by deprivation and alienation of profits, the humiliation of the whole nation by dictating its needs and wants - all that has left us empty and uncertain.

The dispersal of national energies has led to dissimilarities and violence, deplorable to the extreme. As always, the Government bears the responsibility. It is a matter of both perception and reality: the reality of less cohesion and the unsubstantial perception of a guilt that does not exist as such. In spite of all that, any act of domestic violence distresses us. Clashes of different social groups on the streets, politically exploited by interested forces, are terrible events designed to hold us back.

Our only hope is in the fortitude of the Romanian people and its commitment to freedom and democracy. Starting everything anew, we know how difficult it will be to cope with all these situations, but we are determined to win. On such a road it is easy to make mistakes, and we certainly have. But our good will and determination to overcome the present state of affairs must also be taken into account. We are the first to acknowledge errors and to be grateful for having them pointed out. Nothing is more difficult than battling with one's own limitations and deficiencies. We must destroy our own "idola mentis". Every now and again,

(President Iliescu)

revolutions begin like that. Before finding the true God, Abraham destroyed the idols of his father and his family. To believe in the truth, one should start by not believing in the false. There is no alternative. It is a radical and painful change when this is experienced in practical terms, in terms of a whole nation, and in terms of every individual.

What happens now in Romania is unique in history. It is a matter not only of changing a few institutions and dignitaries, but of restructuring mentalities and changing the whole fabric of a society. We strive to free the initiative of the individual, to open up new vistas for the imagination and energies of our nation, in order to enable us to contemplate the future with confidence and real hope.

As a Latin country, Romania professes an unabated belief in the law and in legal institutions. Our Latin roots have held us fast to this belief that the nightmare of totalitarianism was not able to destroy. In domestic and international affairs, we favour the rule of law, and for that reason we profess a strict respect for the Charter of the United Nations.

(President Iliescu)

Our policy is aligned with that of the United Nations. For that reason, we rejoice at the end of a division from which Europe suffered for so long. Nations are now indeed able to unite and manage crises that otherwise might hamper their efforts to reach a common goal. This was demonstrated in August, when we quickly responded in the Security Council to the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. Romania played a role in the adoption of the resolutions that are now so well known, and we viewed our position as one that reflected the common will of the Organization.

Romania took that as its policy: to view major problems as concerning all of us, with decisions to be taken on a common ground. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, my country feels that it must represent not only its own interests but those of the large majority of the United Nations as well. We will work for the Organization. We will faithfully respect the status of the international public servant. We will strengthen our ties with all Member States on the basis of just and stable international relations. We do not support either past or present decisions that affect the way of life of entire peoples, and we will favour reconsidering resolutions that have such connotations.

We are happy to note that major conflicts in the world are about to come to an end. They were either conflicts left over from the Second World War, as was the case with Berlin, or ideological ones ignited by parties and factions in a contest for power. The universality and prestige of the Organization will help in solving all controversies peacefully. No one can disregard the moral pressure of nations united. We were happy to welcome among us Namibia and Liechtenstein, both countries friendly to Romania. We warmly congratulate the people of Yemen on achieving the unity of its country, and we heartily support the memorandum of the 12 European nations on the reduction of the confrontation between the two Koreas, another vestige of the cold war. We are pleased by the political dialogue of the

(President Iliescu)

two Korean parties at the prime-minister level, and we express the hope that the Korean people will be fully represented in the United Nations very soon.

At this very moment one of the most important events in contemporary history is taking place. The unity of the two German States is completed. We should all be aware of the majesty of this day. It marks indeed the end of the Second World War and of its aftermath. The grim consequences of the divergent trends in the world plagued our efforts long after the actual cessation of the shooting war in 1945. The war of ideologies was a prolongation of the confrontation on the battlefields. This rostrum was very often the focal point of bitter rivalries, and we are therefore proud to have been present here in this Hall of nations when the President of the United States proclaimed:

> "Now is the time to set aside old debates, old procedures, old controversies and old resolutions. It is time to replace polemic attacks with pragmatic action." (A/45/PV.14, p. 71)

That is indeed the spirit of our time. We should imbue our actions with that spirit, and not in international politics alone. It would be advisable to apply that attitude to cases of domestic conflicts as well.

Everything I am attempting to express leads us necessarily to a concept that we believe should play a major role in international affairs. We might call it "human solidarity." This, again, is something that history has taught us in Romania well. We have had enough experience of an abstract relationship between the individual and the State, of vague ties between entities called nation-States. The obsolete framework of the cold-war era blinded us to what we now perceive to be the basic principle of the United Nations.

How could we all work here without feeling solidarity in confronting the major issues of international peace and security, the environment, the phenomenon of

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(President Iliescu)

terrorism, drugs and the poverty still rampaging through whole areas of the world? How could we confront those major challenges otherwise than in full solidarity? The most important recent event was the Summit for Children, a wonderful gathering of Heads of State or Government that stressed the will to care for our future. It is significant and reassuring to see that we are able to focus our efforts more on preserving ingenuity and candour and less on fights and political disputes.

In our view, this truly new world should be based on the rule of law. Nothing better reflects what is common to us all than a lawful world. We in Romania believe that international law is meant to bring us together, not to impose on us or to impinge on the sovereign attributes of States. We favour greater recourse to the International Court of Justice in matters of a legal nature and to its advice in all kinds of disputes.

We should like to pay tribute to the good offices of the Secretary-General, to his moral stature and his reputation for impartiality. We would like to see him play a greater role in exercising authority and mediation in the conflicts that are still tearing apart the wonderful unity towards which we are working.

There is no better way of solving the problems confronting us in the world today than by revealing the sources of tensions and conflicts. It seems that nothing can more thoroughly destabilize the world and disrupt the order so painfully achieved than poverty and an unequal sharing of the riches God has bestowed upon us. We shall have to build up a new structure for the economic system that will enable our Organization to adopt a more coherent course in helping poor countries to develop their respective economies and to improve international trade. The spectacular developments in Eastern Europe and Romania's firm determination to achieve a market-oriented economy need the support of the industrialized countries.

(President Iliescu)

Our intention is to undergo a smooth transition without major convulsions and upheavals. We need help and the concurrence of multilateral factors, and we are ready to assume full responsibility in this respect. The issues at stake are of major importance, taking into account the centrality of the economic factor for all societies. In this regard the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on the basis of its rich experience gained during 40 years of its existence as a United Nations instrument, can play an important role in supporting the efforts of developing countries.

My country pledges to respect fully the internationally recognized norms and standards of human rights. In this fundamental matter the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is our guide. These rights belong to us all. They are our rights. We are now implementing, without reservations, the provisions of the Final Document of the General European Conference held at Vienna. Furthermore, Romania contributed to a substantial document at the Conference at Copenhagen on the human dimensions of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The process of ratification of a number of international legal instruments regarding human rights has been started. Foreign observers were invited to watch, in May of this year, the first free elections held in Romania after the Second World War. In fact, we should have preferred to have the United Nations watch our electoral process. There are countries that might need support in this regard. We should be glad to see the United Nations playing a more formal role in efforts to establish the foundations of democratic Governments through free elections. Authoritative experts from around the world might assist a Special Co-ordinator for Electoral Assistance, as was suggested here.

The totalitarian régimes increased the heavy burden of ethnic strifes and conflicts in eastern Europe. My country is no exception to this situation. We are in the process of change in the area of the rights of ethnic minorities also. We

(President Iliescu)

want a pluralistic society with full respect for all human beings. We consider everybody equal, individuals and communities. In Romania, we have already created the framework for political manifestation and representation by all so-called minorities. By law, all national minorities have proportional representation and a rostrum from which to make their voices heard. Of course there are intricacies of inter-ethnic relations, well nourished over the centuries by separate interests, and their consideration will require great wisdom and patience. We will work hard. We will dedicate all our energies to having a good and united country for all our citizens. We truly confess that we do not know the zip code of paradise, but we feel justified in hoping that our people will again provide an example of inter-ethnic peace. There is no other way. These are the basics of life nowadays in any respectable country in the world, and we will not give up one inch of our determination to respect the freedom and well-being of all our citizens.

Romania welcomes the changes in Europe as a first step towards harmonizing the well-known dimensions of security: political, military, economic and humanitarian. These changes have brought us to the threshold of a new chapter in the CSCE process that will lead us to a more reliable security system, broader co-operation and better understanding among nations. The summit meeting to be held in Paris next month is meant to take far-reaching decisions. The CSCE ministerial meeting concluded yesterday at New York highlighted the determination of the participating States to ensure the full success of that historic meeting and made an important contribution.

The positive course of events on the continent could be stimulated by subregional approaches. We hope that the Balkan States, with their traditions of co-operation and having common interests, could play an active part in accelerating

(President Iliescu)

the process of establishing a pattern for European security and co-operation. With this aim in mind, Romania has recently suggested the founding of a Forum for Security and Co-operation in the Balkans that could improve relations among countries in that region as an integral part of the CSCE process.

Along the same lines, we propose a project for co-operation among the countries bordering the Danube. Our intention is to make better use of that great European waterway in a project that might include protection of the environment of the Danube, development of trade and economic co-operation, management of the water flow of the Danube, co-operation in the field of transportation and development of tourism.

Other important initiatives relate to developing multilateral co-operation in the Mediterranean and Black Sea areas. The broad support given the initiative to organize a conference on security and co-operation in the Mediterranean at the current CSCE meeting at Palma de Mallorca is based on the general idea that ensuring peace and stability in that area is of critical importance for the attainment of the goal we are pursuing on the European continent. In our small, interdependent world, what is true of the Mediterranean also applies to other areas of the earth.

We believe that the processes enhancing closer relations and co-operation among States, as well as the strengthening of the concept of "common interests" in the new world design, favour the development of regional and subregional co-operation. In fact, the Charter itself places great emphasis on regional bodies, which, in our opinion, should be encouraged.

It seems to me that Romania is still a country that arouses a lot of controversy. The same is true of its President and the current administration. This is only natural in times of change, when one emerges from a nightmare and

(President Iliescu)

still has its images in his eyes. I want to make it clear here that the glory we really want is that of bringing about peace, stability and freedom in my country. Again and again, we will state our firm belief that freedom of the individual is the starting point of everything. The standards have been set up in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(President Iliescu)

Free and equal human beings endowed with reason and conscience should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. That is the spirit that pervades and animates us in Romania. Our vision will be made clear by our moral and political aspirations. The lofty goals of the United Nations are the only ones that have an appeal for us. We are a decent nation; we respect all other nations, and will work with them to achieve prosperity and peace on Earth. Fellow members, we need your help and understanding, and we shall reciprocate in the same manner.

That is our message; that is the commitment the Romanian people mandated me to convey to the Assembly. As the great Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu wrote a century ago,

"Throughout the length of time, different and still the same,
Their yearnings and their hopes are of one kind composed".

In conclusion, I should like to stress again that we shall be on the side of all those working for the fulfilment of the great ideals of the United Nations.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY

The PRESIDENT: Before we proceed with the general debate I should like to beg the Assembly's indulgence for a moment to permit me to recognize an event which took place this morning and which more than any other symbolizes the end of the cold war: the unification of Germany.

Today we welcome that historic development and the seating among us of a single German delegation. Once more the United Nations becomes an Organization of 159 Members, in circumstances which must give us all joy at the healing of those

(The President)

divisions in Europe which had inhibited the effectiveness of our Organization for decades. This event is a tribute to the statesmanship of individuals too many to name, and it comes as a harbinger of hope for the future.

On behalf of the Assembly, I welcome a united Germany as a sovereign and equal nation within our Organization and extend my best wishes to the delegation of Germany and through it to the entire German people.

I call on the Permanent Representative of Germany.

Mr. BRAUTIGAM (Germany): Mr. President, I wish to thank you on behalf of the German Government for your congratulatory words. The establishment of German unity and the agreements connected with it are, as you have rightly remarked, historic events.

In his speech during the general debate Foreign Minister Genscher said that in this hour Germany is conscious of its European and global responsibility and that it will render its contribution to peace and freedom in Europe and in the world. Developments in Germany are part of the immense transformation taking place in Europe, which gives us a chance to overcome the division of the old continent.

When the Federal Republic of Germany was admitted to the United Nations 17 years ago, our then Foreign Minister, Walter Scheel, stated in the General Assembly that it continued to be our political objective

"to work for a state of peace in Europe in which the German nation will recover its unity in free self-determination". (A/PV.2119, p. 61)

Foreign Minister Genscher reaffirmed that position in many speeches in this Assembly.

We are happy that we have now achieved that goal, and we are grateful. German unity is the result of a peaceful democratic process in which the entire German nation has exercised its right of free self-determination.

The united Germany has no territorial claims against any other country, nor will it have any such claim in the future. It will confirm the existing frontier with Poland in a treaty binding under international law. This will be a major contribution to the peaceful order in Europe now being established.

After unification the Federal Republic of Germany will remain integrated into the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance. The Federal Republic's renunciation of the manufacture and possession of, as well as control over, nuclear, biological and chemical weapons loses none of its validity.

(Mr. Brautigam, Germany)

The recovery of our unity and full sovereignty will not alter our active commitment to the work of the United Nations. We shall do everything in our power to meet the great challenges of our time: safeguarding peace and human rights, promoting economic development and social justice in all parts of the world and protecting mankind's natural resources.

As a developed industrial country, the Federal Republic of Germany is conscious of its responsibility towards the less developed nations. In his message on the occasion of German unity Chancellor Kohl emphasized that we shall not invest in German unity at the expense of the third world. On the contrary, we shall step up our efforts to combat poverty and underdevelopment and to protect the environment.

In this historic hour we commemorate the victims of the Second World War, of tyranny and of the Holocaust. We remember all those who suffered injustice. We are aware of our responsibility.

To the Germans 3 October is a day of joy, of deep emotion and of reflection. We thank all those who have supported the legitimate rights of the German people and placed their trust in us.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE TOFILAU ETI ALESANA, PRIME MINISTER OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF WESTERN SAMOA

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Western Samoa.

Tofilau Eti Alesana, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Western Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Western Samoa, The Honourable Tofilau Eti Alesana, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. ALESANA (Samoa): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to see you guiding our deliberations during the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Malta is a country with which we enjoy warm ties through our association in both the Commonwealth and this Organization. We are confident that your skills and wisdom will guide us well.

I also want to thank our past President, Mr. Garba of Nigeria, for the superlative manner in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly at the forty-fourth session and the special sessions on apartheid, illicit drugs and international economic co-operation.

Likewise, I welcome with joy our new Members: Liechtenstein and Namibia. Liechtenstein is a small country with a long history which can, from its rich and varied experiences, contribute much to us here. Namibia, a new nation whose birth we have awaited so long, will share its youth, vigour and enthusiasm with us.

Today is the very day on which the two Germanys reunite. We warmly congratulate them on this historic step and wish them well in their united future and in the commitment to which they have dedicated themselves with regard to unity and stability in Europe and world peace.

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

It is an honour indeed to address the Assembly at such a moment in history. This past year has seen incredible changes - changes of which there have been so many and which have come so swiftly and often unexpectedly that it has sometimes seemed as if the world were hurtling heedless into a whole new era.

But those of us who have had faith in the United Nations and its system through the years and in a Secretary-General who has so quietly and expertly shouldered his mammoth task knew that the United Nations was taking heed and changing and adapting in response to the world climate, and answering when called upon. Those who in the past called our body unwieldy, and even fossilized, have seen new circumstances bringing new responses and new ways of doing things from Namibia and Central America to Cambodia. The United Nations has proved that, as the Secretary-General states in his report, it

> "... is more than a forum for debate; it is also a place ... of purposeful negotiations". (A/45/1, p. 13)

We know that beyond that, it is a vehicle for active and successful peace-making and peace-keeping. It is now fulfilling the promise its founders envisaged for it.

Of course, the new spirit which has suffused world politics as a result of the end of the cold war has injected an urgent energy not only into the United Nations and its operations, but also into the solution of regional and national problems, and has given heart and hope to people the world over. The changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe have shown that freedom and democracy, though long suppressed, can and will triumph. The power of the people will prevail, and a new style of statesmanship that has the courage to listen to the people and admit the wrongs of the past and attempt to correct them is, it seems, emerging around the globe. While we see it most plainly in the USSR and Eastern Europe, there is evidence of it across the globe and tyrants should tremble at this wind of candour.

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

Those who do not may well fall before it, as we have seen happen most graphically in several countries of Eastern Europe.

Of course, the most glaring and urgent instance of refusal to acknowledge and reverse a dreadful wrong is the current stand of President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. While the world has impressed upon him the need to do so through resolution after resolution of the Security Council and taken action under Chapter VII of the Charter - evidence of the seriousness with which this threat to world peace and security is regarded - he refuses to comply and only utters more threats. We fully support all the resolutions of the Security Council and are taking measures to comply with them where required. We call upon President Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait immediately and unconditionally. We strongly condemn the invasion and the pillaging of Kuwait as well as the brutalities committed there: the taking of hostages and the barbaric use of them as human shields and the incursions into and violations of diplomatic missions. All these actions flout the Charter and international law and offend the conscience of the world.

The rays of hope touching other areas of the world have not penetrated there or the two other major trouble areas of the Middle East. We seem no closer to solutions of either the Palestinian problem or Lebanon. The frustrations of the Palestinians in the occupied territories still fester and break out into violence, which is answered with violence and repression. All violence must stop and dialogue replace it. We continue to feel that the most effective way to achieve this is at an international conference under United Nations auspices with all concerned parties participating.

Lebanon is still faction-ridden and strife-torn. Those who aggravate these frictions, and use the situation to their own advantage by their interference, must refrain from such activities before Lebanon can begin to be reunified and rebuilt.

One of the most alarming features in the Middle East is the proliferation of

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

deadly weapons, including those of mass destruction and those which desolate populations by chemical means. We are faced with the possibility of the whole region becoming a virtual horror chamber, particularly in view of the dangerous repercussions which these various situations may have on each other and which therefore link the different problems in the Middle East. This points to the need for a comprehensive new approach for the whole Middle Eastern region.

The situation in Afghanistan had seemed ready for settlement. The voices of reason had seemed to have penetrated there and it was hoped that on the withdrawal of the Soviet troops - action to be commended - a comprehensive peace could be worked out under United Nations auspices. However, continued fighting and factionalism has delayed the process. There is a stalemate at present and we hope that the various parties will soon come to a negotiation for a lasting peace, with the assistance of the United Nations.

With the situation in Cambodia we return to the subject of promising developments on the international scene - and that situation is certainly one of them. My country has always supported the untiring efforts of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to help resolve this 11-year-old conflict. Now we may be seeing some light at the end of the tunnel. The peace efforts of ASEAN and other nations have recently given reason to hopes of a political breakthrough soon. In this context we are most heartened that the five permanent members of the Security Council have launched an initiative to help secure peace in Cambodia, and we hail their framework agreement as an important contribution in this direction. Security Council resolution 668 (1990) is a historic document and will definitely provide impetus to the Cambodian peace process. We should also like to express our special support for the roles played by the co-Chairmen of the Paris Conference - Indonesia and France. Australia and Japan also deserve particular mention for their constructive contributions to the peace negotiations.

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

We urge all the Cambodian parties concerned and Viet Nam to consider the higher interests of the Cambodian people. It is time for national reconciliation centred around His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who must continue to have a key role to play in the Cambodian peace settlement.

In Central America we see the perseverance of regional leaders in working with the United Nations towards a peaceful resolution of an area's problems rewarded with success. The role played by the United Nations in the disarming and demobilization of the Nicaraguan resistance - and even the destruction of weapons - and in observing the electoral process, as well as the current efforts of the United Nations to find solutions to the conflicts in El Salvador and Guatemala, demonstrate the innovativeness and flexibility of the United Nations in action today.

The world rejoiced at the long-sought-after emergence of Namibia as an independent nation. The final act in Namibia's long struggle to attain statehood was a fine example of a successful multilateral effort. It was a triumph not only for the United Nations but also for democratic principles and decolonization, and we were pleased to see the Namibian constitution, based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, come into force. We wish Namibia well.

There is promising progress on the Western Saharan problem. Once again United Nations participation has resulted in an agreed set of proposals and a plan approved by the Security Council which should set in motion a timetable for the necessary steps towards self-determination. This referendum, convened under the auspices of the United Nations, should ensure a successful and peaceful outcome of the determination process.

One of the early successes of the United Nations in this post-cold-war era of constructive co-operation was, of course, the comprehensive peace plan devised by the Security Council to put an end to the Iran-Iraq war. The continuing

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

implementation of the plan under the watchful guidance of the Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group bears witness to the renewed vigour of the United Nations.

Even in South Africa there are signs that the South African Government, heretofore one of the most cruel, stubborn and intransigent, may be beginning to acknowledge the dreadful error of its ways. With the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the partial lifting of the state of emergency and the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid groups, we hope that we are seeing the beginning of a new way of thinking on the part of the South African authorities and that we shall soon see definite steps taken to dismantle apartheid.

On the peninsula of Korea we are pleased to see that talks have been taking place between the two Koreas at the level of the Prime Ministers. We should like to see these become substantive discussions leading to the formulation of a timetable for reunification. With the example of the unified Germany before them and the recent unification of Yemen, the Koreans should take heart and allow the spirit of compromise which now prevails to infuse these meetings. Our firm belief in the need for universality in world bodies leads us to support the admission of both Koreas to the United Nations. There is no question of this being a barrier to reunification. In fact, we think it will be a positive step and one which would encourage dialogue and co-operation between the two parties and hasten reunification.

This is the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. So many of us have come to independence by way of the United Nations and know at firsthand the historic significance of this document. United Nations trusteeship over Western Samoa was terminated in 1962, following self-determination and a plebiscite in 1961, which

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

found in favour of Matai - or chiefly - suffrage. Although this system is itself based on democratic principles, I am pleased to state in this Hall, 29 years later, that on the 29th of this month we shall be holding a national referendum to determine whether or not the people of our country now wish to adopt universal suffrage.

The International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism began this year, and we look forward, indeed, to the day when the self-determination process will be completed throughout the world. In our region, New Caledonia is making steady progress along the road to self-determination and the French authorities are continuing the positive measures promised to promote political, economic and social development in the Territory. We urge all parties to maintain the pace of progress and to continue the dialogue in the interests of all the people of New Caledonia and a peaceful path to self-determination.

There is no doubt that the new climate of co-operation and partnership that has been fashioned by the courage and vision of the great world leaders of today has presented the world with political opportunities heretofore undreamt of to resolve regional conflicts that remain intractable and to address issues of concern to all citizens of the world.

Concern for the universal good, global welfare and due regard for the legitimate concerns, and, indeed, for the very real fears of human beings throughout the world must surely be obligatory for responsible and enlightened leaders today.

Individual nations must not have unhampered freedom obstinately to pursue actions that are repugnant and terrifying to others and that endanger the welfare of all. Nuclear testing in the Pacific and elsewhere must stop immediately. For 15 years now the frantic protests of the peoples of the Pacific against nuclear testing on fragile Mururoa Atoll have been completely ignored by one country which

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

had simply decided to embark on a testing programme, come what might - a programme which so far has conducted over 100 nuclear explosions.

In contrast, we are delighted to note Japan's decision to cease drift-net fishing in the Pacific a year before the date set in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year. We hope that the few who still practise this vile fishing method, wherever it occurs, will soon follow suit.

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

Concerted efforts and strategies must be developed to protect the environment and to deal with the myriad problems that may be attributable to the greenhouse effect as well as the other environmental ills of this planet. We are optimistic that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in 1992, will provide a thorough and comprehensive review of our staggering global environmental problems. The Preparatory Committee, under the able guidance of Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore, has already begun important work.

We ourselves were recently subject to the vagaries of nature, when we were hit early this year by the devastation of Cyclone Ofa, which did incalculable damage to our fragile environment. I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who proffered aid in our hour of need - international organizations, countries, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. This year begins the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and we feel it is timely indeed.

Timely also was the General Assembly's Declaration early this year on International Economic Co-operation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries.

We sincerely hope that the new, emerging challenges we are confronting today with respect to the political, economic, and social reforms taking place in Europe, coupled with the alarming crisis in the Middle East, will not affect too adversely and further burden the economies of the developing and least developed countries.

As I come to the end of this statement, I feel that I must reiterate my optimism regarding the political climate of the coming decade, and I want to pay tribute to the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the emergence of this exciting new scenario. The pace of disarmament must intensify and the peace dividend we have heard so much about must become a reality, so that

(Mr. Alesana, Samoa)

we can do the things to benefit humanity that we should have been doing all along.

In particular, we want to see the situation of the world's children change immeasurably for the better. This is International Literacy Year, and while we cannot underestimate the importance of literacy to the mental growth of a child, this is just one of so many things we must do to ameliorate the plight of our children. The World Summit for Children in which we participated last weekend focused the world's attention on the frightening prospects for the world's future if we do not ensure that our children develop healthy in mind, body and soul. It is definitely time to re-order our priorities - to put the well-being of the world's children, and therefore the world's future, above all else. Now is the time to turn from the insanity of war and weaponry to the fulfilment of the promise of the human race.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of Western Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Tofilau Eti Alesana, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Western Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. MANGLAPUS (Philippines): On behalf of President Corazon Aquino and the Philippine delegation, I extend to you, Sir, and to the people and Government of the Republic of Malta, warmest felicitations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. Your country reflects the rich Mediterranean blend of races and cultures and is therefore a microcosm of this Assembly, over which, with much deserved honour, you now preside.*

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* Mr. Afonso (Mozambique), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

Likewise, I should like at this point to thank His Excellency Joseph N. Garba of Nigeria, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, and to congratulate him on work well done. There were many accomplishments during his term, not the least of which was the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, which produced a significant consensus declaration on economic co-operation - so important in our quest for peace.

It is a year since we last met. Each year of events has its own character. We may call this year, 1990 - this first in the United Nations Decade of International Law - the year of the reality of freedom and the possibility of peace.

Some may think this characterization naive in the context of the threat to peace in a critical area of the world. But the facts are there.

The dream of one democratic Europe was once thought to be an absurd fantasy. For the only formula was thought to be the destruction by war of monolithic repression. And everyone knew it would have to be a nuclear war, which no one could win.

The idea of a totally democratic and therefore peaceful Latin America was once thought to be an empty illusion. There were too many odds against it. There was that theory, for instance, long ago proven bankrupt but still persistent, that democracy is an invention that suits only the developed West. And there was that super-Power policy, now, happily, amended, to encourage military dictators because it is easier to deal abroad with one man than with a messy democratic régime.

The dream of a successful settlement in Cambodia and therefore of peace in South-East Asia was until only a month ago thought to be impossible. It seemed useless to try to unravel the intricate ideological and historical intertwining in that unhappy land, or to find a graceful exit for the intervening Powers. Those Powers had fostered surrogates, and those surrogates had found their own domestic differences aggravated by policies designed in distant foreign capitals.

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

Yet all these impossible dreams have in this concluding year found either actual, or at least inchoate, reality. The democratization of Eastern Europe, though not yet total, is real. For the first time in history, all of continental Latin America is democratic. The initial instruments for peace in Cambodia have been executed, and the intervening Powers are finding their graceful exits and divided nations are being reunited: today Germany; tomorrow, we hope, Korea.

It is the confluence of three historical factors that has produced this pioneering prospect for universal peace. The first is the rise of the power of the peoples of the world. One by one, these peoples have spoken, and this is their simple but non-negotiable demand: "We want democracy. We want peace."

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

That was the message of our Philippine people-power revolution of 1986. And since then it has resonated through the public plazas of the world, toppling dictators and defenestrating repressive ideologies. It is never people who propose war; it is Governments. Therefore peace, universal peace, will be possible only when all the peoples of the world are free and when it is their voice that commands the structure of every Government.

There is a second factor in the success of the peace process. Efforts for peace have failed before, but where they have succeeded persistence has been a dominant ingredient. In Eastern Europe and in Latin America the people never gave up. In Cambodia the leaders never gave up. The Jakarta meetings and the Paris Conference, Ali Alatas and Roland Dumas never gave up. The permanent members of the Security Council never gave up.

There is that third factor. It is the United Nations. This "perseverance of the United Nations", in the language of the Secretary-General's report of September 1990, has produced peace and democracy in Namibia a quarter of a century after the General Assembly resolution and a dozen years after the Security Council action.

We sense the coming death of apartheid in the wake of peaceful United Nations initiatives. We see the rise of the new democracy in Nicaragua; a cease-fire in democratic El Salvador; a political solution in democratic Guatemala; a referendum in Western Sahara, the promotion of a consensus among guarantor Powers in Afghanistan.

The inventory of the Secretary-General's successes is long indeed. There is only one sombre cloud in the world and it hangs over that region we have come to call the Middle East.

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

Perhaps the first step towards understanding that region is to give proper recognition to its objective geographic position. The region called the Far East once possessed only a relative colonial Euro-centric identity until it came into its own as East Asia. Why "Middle East"? Middle between what? The term was coined only in 1902 by a Western expansionist. The region is West Asia and North Africa and it is time to recognize them as objective absolutes.

The people of West Asia and North Africa must be no different from those of Eastern Europe and Latin America in their human aspirations. Their demand, if self-articulated, would be irrevocable: freedom and peace.

Last week, President François Mitterrand spoke to this Assembly on guarantees for "the democratic expression of the Kuwaiti people's will". Why, indeed, should the rhetoric of national responses to the crisis in that region be devoid of any mention of those values while the rest of the world is awash with the tidal wave of democracy and peace?

We hear of violations of borders, of threats to territorial integrity, of mass displacement of human beings, of disruption of the oil market, of devastation of economies and of destruction of lives. These are grave acts and the Philippines has from their inception joined the United Nations in their condemnation.

We have accepted the Security Council resolutions and implemented them, even as we have joined other Asian Governments in appreciating the positive attitude of the Iraqi Government towards the evacuation of our workers, and even as we appreciate the assistance to our evacuees by Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, by Spain, Japan, New Zealand and by the United Nations agencies, particularly the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization, which have been doing their work with the assistance of the European Community and the United States of America.

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

The United Nations and with it the significant Powers of the world are joined in confronting this threat and in searching for a formula for peace.

But perhaps we should be hearing more suggestions that this crisis - with its Chinese character combination of danger and opportunity - might be an occasion, after territorial sovereignties are restored, to attune that region to the marching beat of our new world: democracy, freedom and peace for all.

There is a rallying call for all to bring peace to West Asia. The call is for all and why not? It is the concern of all when one nation invades another, when hundreds of thousands of workers are displaced, when fuel costs bring poor economies to their knees.

But many of us are already prostrate on our knees and it is not just the West Asian crisis that has brought us down to this abject position. Time and again we have come to this Assembly for relief. I do not speak for a country in arrears when I make this plea in behalf of all the debtor nations of the world. The Philippine debt is inherited from a dictator. But it is an inherited obligation and we honour it. The Philippines is a faithful payer of principal and interest. We indulge in no radical posturing. We impose on ourselves no unilateral moratoriums.

To service our debt our country must divert over 40 per cent of our annual budget for payments on our debt and almost a third of this is for foreign debt service. Since 1986 we have sent out annually $1.7 billion more than we receive. How shall we resolve debt? It is valuable to reschedule debt. But it is even more precious and human to forgive debt.

The makers of policy must agree to resolve the question: Who is entitled to debt relief and debt forgiveness? Is it possible to fix standards rather than

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

leave the answer to the strengths and weaknesses of negotiators and financial markets? They must agree to alternative adjustment programmes to promote growth that will suit both planned and free economies.

The Philippines profoundly appreciates the relief it is receiving through the operations of the Brady Plan, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But the makers of policy must develop new modes to carry out global solutions, for the present mechanisms are not equipped for such a momentous mission.

The IMF traditionally approaches short-term problems, like balance of payments, with an average span of 18 months. But the structural and financial horizons of transnational debt can span a generation.

The World Bank has primarily concerned itself with financing projects and, more recently, with programmes. Yet it is only in the context of an aggregate panorama that the financial obligations of nations can be amply appreciated.

It is now almost a decade that the debt crisis has been thundering across our planet. The assault is overwhelming us because our defences are isolated and our strategies fragmented. We propose a global counter-attack by forces that will transcend geography and ideology.

If the whole world can be summoned to confront the invaders in West Asia, why may we not summon this same world to confront that invader from the nether world of international finance, that monster created by debtor and creditor alike? Are we not entitled to marshal the cerebral talents of nations for this confrontation?

At Versailles, in 1919, the victorious allies of the First World War refused to condone the enervating obligations of the defeated Germans and Germany went to the radical right for a solution. That solution produced the Second World War.

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

The Allies, again victorious in 1945, remembered Versailles. At London, they forgave 70 per cent of the German interest payments. At that time the principal on that debt amounted to $1.5 billion or roughly $8 billion in today's terms.

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

The same bold visionary leadership that condoned that debt also conceived the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The allies condoned 70 per cent of the interest payments of a defeated nation whose aggressiveness had already devastated half of Europe and shaken the world. In victory and in order to nip at conception another monstrous aggression, the allies forgave debt. In victory and for peace, anything was possible.

Again, last week President Mitterrand said verbatim, that if Iraq were to withdraw from Kuwait, "everything might become possible". May we not claim the same possibility for countries guilty of no devastation and no invasion, guilty only at most of some improvidence in borrowings and in fiscal management? Did President Mitterrand mean to include the condonation of their debt as one of the "possibles"?

Before victory and in search of peace, before devastation even takes place, is it possible to be human and to speak of a tabula rasa, to give the world a fresh beginning? Only last Sunday we filled this historic Assembly Hall with Heads of State, Heads of Government and the children of the world. Children read in many tongues from the ringing Declaration of the Summit of the child.

There was something that was not declared about the child of today which I now respectfully submit once more to the Assembly. The third world now owes $1.3 trillion. Therefore every child in that world is born not only, as some theologies profess, with original sin but also with original debt, up to $1,000 at the moment of birth, which at 10 per cent compounded interest reaches $7,000 at age 21. In this glorious year of the child is it not time to redeem the original debt of that child?

(Mr. Manglapus, Philippines)

The Philippines will never renege on its obligations, but neither will it cease to live up to its obligation to plead for universal justice.

Mr. JESZENSZKY (Hungary): May I first of all extend to Mr. Guido de Marco of Malta my congratulations on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome to our midst the representatives of Namibia and Liechtenstein as new Members of the United Nations.

Hungary, for the first time in more than four decades, has a Government which is responsible to a freely and democratically elected Parliament. My first duty at this forum is to extend sincere thanks on behalf of our new Government and our people to the United Nations for the moral and political support it gave to the 1956 Hungarian revolution and national freedom fight and the period following its suppression.

Gloria victis was the message the Organization sent to the whole world. The reports of the Committee of the Five, led by Sir Leslie Munro, the self-sacrificing activity of Danish diplomat Bang-Jensen and consistent efforts to keep the Hungarian question on the agenda of the United Nations had filled the suppressed with gratefulness, among them the then 15-year-old student who is now standing before you representing the Republic of Hungary turned free. Although the Hungarian people never abandoned the ideals of those times, it was not until recently that history enabled us to accomplish the most important aim of October 1956: the establishment of a free, independent and democratic Hungary.

Through its endeavour to do justice to our people, the United Nations acted in accordance with its mandate under the Charter, as it did and continues to do in the case of a number of other small countries. Recognition of this is particularly timely in our contemporary world.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

The period since last year's session of the General Assembly has witnessed historic changes in Europe and also on other continents. The political ice-age came to an end and a new system of international relations has started to take shape.

As a result of the turn of events in the countries of the East-Central European region, the bipolar system laid down after Yalta has collapsed. The peoples of Central Europe have finally got rid of the Stalinist Party-State dictatorship, so alien to the traditions of European development, and have set themselves the aim of establishing a form of State with the rule of law based on freedom, a market economy and the enjoyment of human rights. After the fall of communism a qualitatively new situation on the continent has emerged. The earlier artificial division of Europe on an ideological basis and the resulting bloc-type approach of political, military and economic confrontation have been replaced by the historic opportunity to create a united Europe based on common values.

The transformations taking place in the Soviet Union have been greatly instrumental in bringing about these changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Our eastern neighbour made a decisive contribution in 1945 to the liberation of our land from foreign occupation and from a puppet régime subservient to it. But that promise of freedom soon turned into a system that acquired Orwellian characteristics. It was not until recently that the Soviet leadership became a reliable partner in our own quest genuinely to set the Hungarian people free and do away with any foreign military presence, so that our nation can, at last, exercise fully its right to self-determination. The profound changes in Hungary have not only been an organic part of this process, but - and we are proud of this - also a catalyst for it. A significant role was played by the fact that respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms has been a key element in the process of renewal in Hungary.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

The results of the free and democratic parliamentary and municipal elections in Hungary this year mean a complete transformation of the entire political and social system. The new Hungary and its coalition Government are committed to democracy, political, economic and cultural pluralism and the rule of law in accordance with European standards.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

Consistent representation, protection and effective realization of national interests are priorities in Hungarian foreign policy. The era of one-sided foreign-policy dependence has been replaced by a desire to build balanced relations. This implies a change in orientation, aimed at restoration of the ties that for 1,000 years linked Hungary to Europe but were severed four decades ago and at making Hungary once again an equal and respected member of the community of European nations. The Republic of Hungary shares European values and the idea of Atlantic partnership. Our country participates in the efforts to promote the processes of European integration and is committed to making an active contribution to the realization of European unity.

A most important condition for Hungary's integration into Europe lies in its becoming a full-fledged member of the European Community before the end of this decade. This means, on the one hand, that we should strive to conclude an association agreement with the Community by 1 January 1992 and, on the other hand, that we should create institutional machinery for political co-operation, alongside ongoing commercial and economic collaboration.

Another important aspect of our intention to join Europe is Hungary's membership in the Council of Europe. We are convinced that the pluralist parliamentary democracy that emerged in the wake of free elections and the new system of self-government, as well as legislative and law-enforcement activity aimed at the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, will enable Hungary to meet fully the strict requirements of membership of the Council of Europe and will make possible its formal admission to that important organization in the near future.

Development of relations with neighbouring countries is obviously an important objective of our foreign policy. Clearly, under the new set of conditions, this is a historic opportunity to make full use of the potential, stemming from 1,000 years

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

of coexistence, for co-operation based on democratic principles, mutual benefit, shared interests and values, and full awareness of a common destiny. In the view of the Hungarian Government, the corner-stone of democracy and the rule of law in our region - the eastern half of Europe - is represented not only by multi-party elections, but also, as an indispensable element of European stability, by tolerance recognition of the right to an autonomous life, and guaranteed preservation of the identities and specificities of the different national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as respect for their individual and collective rights. In this context, we firmly believe that guaranteeing human and minority rights for the more than 3 million ethnic Hungarians living in countries bordering on Hungary is a fundamental condition for the development of harmonious inter-State relations in Europe.

We believe that a significant contribution to the development of good-neighbourly relations and to the unification of Europe can be made by means of institutionalized regional co-operation, such as occurs within the Pentagonale that has been established between Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Yugoslavia and Hungary.

The bipolar world that characterized the period following the creation of the United Nations is increasingly being replaced by multipolarity. Hungary welcomes and supports this change. The institutional system of multilateralism is of great importance to us in this context. In our world of interdependence and increasing integration we lend active support to the United Nations - the most comprehensive organization of our time. In addition, we support all forms of regional co-operation, including the process of European security and co-operation, which concerns us most directly.

So far as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) is concerned, we believe that a qualitatively new situation has been created by the

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

changes that have taken place in Europe. The States participating in the Helsinki process - among them, Hungary - have committed themselves to common values. Consequently, the security system built on bloc confrontation is becoming anachronistic, and the participating States have already begun to set up a new system of security based on principles of co-operation with the aim of establishing a united Europe.

The Republic of Hungary believes that its security can best be strengthened by the establishment of precisely such a co-operative security system, which will embrace all CSCE States and will be in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In this context, and in pursuance of our efforts to end the outdated bloc approach, we have revised our relationship with the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The starting-point of our position on the issue is that, from the very moment it was set up, the Warsaw Treaty, which was established - and was imposed upon us - 35 years ago, failed to serve the national and security interests of Hungary. It is the firm and declared intention of the Government of the new Hungary to leave the military organization of the Warsaw Treaty soon. Inevitably that will be followed by our complete departure from the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The Republic of Hungary wishes, in that way, to make an effective and lasting contribution to the affirmation of its independence and sovereignty and of its commitment to democracy, to the reassertion of its European identity, and to the elimination of the bloc concept from world politics.

The Hungarian Government looks forward with great expectation to the CSCE summit meeting to be held at Paris this November. We are confident that, building upon the outstanding results achieved within the framework of the Helsinki process, the summit on the Seine will close the era of the cold war definitively and will herald the programme for a peaceful, democratic, united and prosperous Europe, free

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

in every part of the continent. On this historic day, the reunification of Germany is a contribution to the attainment of that goal. After more than 40 years of partition, there is again a united homeland for the German people, where they may decide freely their own future. Hungary warmly welcomes the birth of a united Germany, established in accordance with the wish of the German people.

Looking beyond Europe, we may safely say that the basically favourable development of the international situation facilitates efforts to solve the continuing regional crises or, at least, to ease tensions.

A sad exception is the Middle East, where a grave new problem has been added to the existing ones. My Government has resolutely condemned Iraq's aggression against Kuwait and demands the unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops and the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty. At the end of the twentieth century the argument that history explains actions such as those that we are witnessing in the Gulf area can in no way justify aggressive behaviour by any State. It is unacceptable short-sightedness, fraught with grave consequences, to allow any member of the international community to act in such a way. The world must not stand idly by. It must not tolerate brutality and violence that wipes a United Nations Member State off the map. We therefore support fully Security Council resolutions aimed at ending the aggression and eliminating its consequences, and we are ready to take an active part in the implementation of those resolutions, no matter what demands that may put on our economy.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

Nor does the recent case of the use of force improve the climate for the resolution of the long-drawn-out Arab-Israeli conflict, which has already taken an unbearable toll in human lives and suffering among the peoples of the region, Arabs and Jews alike. It is therefore high time to go beyond hostile attitudes and seek a peaceful solution by way of negotiation. This, naturally, requires the parties to respect the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and each other's legitimate interests, namely the right of Israel to live in peace within recognized borders on the one hand, and the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people on the other.

In addition to the parties directly concerned in this conflict, we, the representatives of Member States, can also help remove the factors impeding mutual understanding. In our view, one such factor is General Assembly resolution 3379 (XXX) of 1975 equating zionism with racism. My Government deems this resolution to be a product of the bygone age of confrontation and dissociates itself from it. We believe that getting rid of the ideological shackles of the past may generate favourable processes, not only in Europe, but in other parts of the world as well.

An example of this is provided by what has taken place in the southern part of Africa, where the recent past has witnessed basically positive changes. Namibia's independence, and the fact that the dismantling of the apartheid system has begun in South Africa, are of paramount importance in this context. We are of the view that the favourable changes there should be reflected in our debates here, as well as in our adoption of a new approach to the issue. While invariably condemning all forms of discrimination, especially racial discrimination, including the system of apartheid, we, for our part, are exploring possibilities that encourage the forces in the Republic of South Africa working for the elimination of such phenomena.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

The exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which represent universal values, plays a major role. In order for them to be fully respected, the States Members of the United Nations have assumed unequivocal and detailed obligations which serve to ensure the application of civilized norms. It is the duty and the responsibility of us all to keep on monitoring compliance with these norms while at the same time being accountable to the international community.

In our age, the power of human rights has become global and cannot serve any particular interests. The idea of free individuals in a free world transcends State frontiers and fulfils a mission which will ultimately lead us to a world without borders. Fortunately, the history of the recent past has given us several striking examples that confirm us in the belief that not even barbed wire, walls, foreign occupation, xenophobia, discriminatory policies or the shadow - or even the use - of bayonets are capable of really preventing the advocates of human rights from pursuing their mission and attaining the loftiest goals.

For the Republic of Hungary, human rights and fundamental freedoms are basic values of democracy. In this connection, we highly appreciate the activities of the United Nations in promoting the international protection of these rights. We, for our part, are ready and willing to contribute our share to effective international action against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We shall not hesitate to come out most resolutely against such violations, wherever they may occur.

The Government of the Republic of Hungary devotes particular attention to the international protection of minority rights. Therefore, we welcome the growing awareness that the rights of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities form an integral part of universally recognized human rights.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

The international community has both the right and the obligation to follow with constant attention the situation of minorities, to prevent potential conflicts, and in the case of violation of their rights, to restore legal protection and establish the responsibility of the party concerned.

In this context, Hungary attaches paramount importance to the effective protection of the rights of national minorities and to the establishment of an international mechanism for the protection of minorities. We have two reasons for this: our respect for the rule of law in internal and international behaviour, on the one hand, and, on the other, our responsibility, in accordance with international law, for the Hungarians who live beyond our borders as minorities.

The heavy storms of history in the twentieth century, which were not merciful to small nations, and the decisions serving the interests of other Powers, forced millions of Hungarians to live beyond their frontiers in minority status. Hungarians living in neighbouring countries have become the largest minority in Europe. Their fate cannot be a matter of indifference to us, just as we cannot remain indifferent to the fate of minorities living anywhere else in the world. Within this context, Hungary seeks - through legislative and other action - to ensure the full enjoyment of minority rights by those national minorities who live in our country. We are convinced that the international forums, the most important of which is the United Nations, have an indispensable role to play in the protection and enforcement of human and minority rights alike, and here I should like to add that, in my opinion, the changes in Central and Eastern Europe have decisively contributed to the possibility of finding a solution to these problems, and to this end I welcome the policies of the new democracies in the region.*

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* The President returned to the Chair.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

In keeping with the requirements of our times, Hungary considers it a highly important and urgent task to initiate the preparation of a binding instrument on the universal protection of the rights of minorities. The early finalization of a draft declaration on the rights of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in the Commission on Human Rights would be a major step in this direction. The drawing up of an appropriate set of guarantees and the setting up of a control mechanism should also form part of an international codification, and we are prepared to play an active pioneering role in the accomplishment of this task as soon as possible.

The issue of refugees is inseparable from that of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The waves of refugees are a dramatic and tragic phenomenon of our present-day world. Among its root causes a major one is the lack of guarantees for human rights. Hungary is facing this serious problem for the third consecutive year as it has received over 40,000 refugees in the recent past. The fact that most refugees come from among Hungarian minorities is deplorable.

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

In the Hungarian Government's view it is the inalienable right of all individuals and peoples and ethnic groups to live in their native land, where their human rights, including the right to life and liberty, the right to leave their country and the right to return, should be fully respected. We consider it a task of the international community to promote the voluntary repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin. In this connection my delegation suggests that, in co-operation with the United Nations and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, an international agreement be elaborated aimed at facilitating the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

As a result of the new era that has recently begun in international relations the possibility of building a multipolar world on a democratic basis is within our reach. Ideological confrontation has been replaced by a desire for mutually beneficial co-operation. All this affords a unique opportunity for the United Nations to live up fully to the lofty purposes and principles that were enshrined in its Charter 45 years ago.

The strengthening of multilateralism and the recent achievements of the world Organization have greatly enhanced the role and prestige of the United Nations. We particularly appreciate its efforts at conflict resolution and its peace-keeping activities, to which we have given our support through our participation. The new era of international relations will make it possible for the world body to focus on the real global, social and economic issues that are crucial to the future of mankind.

In speaking highly of the achievements of the United Nations we wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, whom we had the honour of welcoming in Budapest last May. Hungary has a primary interest in seeing the role of the United Nations enhanced and its

(Mr. Jeszenszky, Hungary)

activity become more effective. My Government will continue to work towards that end. Accordingly, we are committed to the principle of the universality of the United Nations, and we believe that neither political or ideological reasons nor references to the division of countries may serve to keep away from us those States that otherwise fulfil the requirements of United Nations membership.

At this forum I should like to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Hungary to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. The foreign policy of the independent and democratic Hungarian Government will continue to remain consistent and predictable and open to co-operation with all our partners throughout the world.

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE FATHER WALTER H. LINI, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Father Walter Lini, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, His Excellency the Honourable Father Walter Lini, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Father LINI (Vanuatu): I have the honour of speaking today on behalf of the States members of the South Pacific Forum in my capacity as current Chairman of the Forum.

At the outset I extend to you, Mr. President, our congratulations and best wishes on your election to preside over this body. Malta, like most of the

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

countries of our own region, is a small island State. Thus, we take particular notice of the honour that has been bestowed upon you. We extend these congratulations to your Government and people as well.

We also applaud the accomplishments of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly and of the three special sessions of the Assembly conducted under the capable leadership of your predecessor, His Excellency Major-General Joseph N. Garba of Nigeria. To him, we express our appreciation and offer our congratulations.

I also take this opportunity to extend our congratulations and best wishes to the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia, which has finally been allowed to take its rightful place within the community of nations. Namibia's triumph is a triumph for Africa, for the United Nations and for all of humanity. We also congratulate the Principality of Liechtenstein on becoming the newest Member of the United Nations. We look forward to the constructive contributions its delegation will make.

Today an important chapter of world history closes, and a new chapter begins. The formal establishment of a single German State provides ample evidence that the most lasting ideas and qualities are those that unite rather than those that divide. This should also serve as a reminder that no people can ever be removed from the context of its history nor permanently barred from the appointed rendezvous with its destiny.

Our congratulations and sincere best wishes are extended to the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Germany on this historic day. Similarly, our congratulations and sincere best wishes are extended to the Government and people of the Republic of Yemen on the recent unification of their country.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

In both instances unification was achieved peacefully and resulted from the will of the people themselves rather than from political edict or military fiat. Therein lies an important message. It is to be hoped that that message will be borne in mind by those who might mistakenly believe that another path can be followed successfully. Unity, much like love, can only be based on free consent, equality and mutual respect.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

The beautiful and majestic Pacific Ocean comprises almost one third of the Earth's surface. Our corner of that great ocean lies in the South Pacific, which is itself a dramatic study in great contrasts. Nature has endowed us with great natural beauty and a hospitable environment. However, from time to time, our beautiful skies turn cloudy, our clear blue waters become turbulent and our calm tropical breezes become frightening winds of death and destruction. Our environment is thus a blessing and at the same time a major concern.

Most, but not all, of the countries in our region are small island States which are extremely vulnerable to external economic factors, as well as sudden climatic changes. All of us prefer to live in peace; yet we repeatedly see our lands, our waters and our atmosphere utilized by others to test their horrible weapons of mass destruction.

All of us share a deep and abiding commitment to the United Nations and to the principles of international democracy. However, we are often struck by the fact that our concerns - and in some instances our very existence - are often neglected or even forgotten in the context of the larger global picture. In a symbolic sense, some of us on occasion feel as invisible to others as the title of the classic work, The Invisible Man by the noted African-American author, Ralph Ellison.

Although we are island countries, we recognize that, when it comes to economic development and the outstanding social issues of contemporary civilization, no nation is an island unto itself. Some may consider our geographic location to be remote. However, we are very much a part of today's world, just as we were very much a part of the history of yesterday's world. Like the peoples of every other region, we have our own history and our own cultures. We also share common dreams and common expectations, just as we share common fears and common frustrations.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

The South Pacific Forum, our paramount regional organization, held its twenty-first annual meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on 31 July and 1 August. The region's Heads of Government addressed a number of important political, economic and environmental concerns. These have been set forth in our communiqué, which we have requested the Secretary-General to circulate as an official document of the General Assembly.

That document, A/45/456, in very brief form sets forth some of our major concerns and preoccupations. However, it does not touch upon every single issue that we believe merits the attention of the international community. For example, we highlighted some of our major concerns on environmental issues, including the very real threat posed to the survival of some Pacific island nations by climatic changes and a rise in the sea-level. However, our very deep concern over nuclear testing in the South Pacific is by now well known to every member of the international community and needs no explicit restatement.

The testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific continues to cause us to fear for the future of our young and for unborn generations. At a time when the threat of nuclear war between the super-Powers is far less likely now than it ever was, we continue to ask: What sin have we committed? Why must our region be the site for the testing of nuclear devices, particularly now that the cold war has ended? So soon after the highly successful World Summit for Children, we are struck by the irony of having to pose the question: How, may we ask, are we to enhance the development of our children unless we can assure them that the environment we bequeath to them is an environment capable of sustaining life?

Another great concern shared by all members of the South Pacific Forum is the planned destruction of existing chemical weapons at Johnston Atoll. Our concerns

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

have been communicated to the Government of the United States, and we are continuing a constructive dialogue with the United States that centres on these concerns. Without a doubt, our central concern is this specific issue and on our broader conviction that our region should not become a permanent toxic waste disposal centre.

On another environmental issue of great importance to the Forum, we have welcomed Japan's decision to cease large-scale drift-net fishing in our region one year in advance of the date stipulated in General Assembly resolution 44/225. This was a very positive measure taken by Japan, and we appreciate its demonstrated sensitivity to our concerns.

France has also demonstrated sensitivity with respect to one of the great concerns of countries in our region. As the international community prepares to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, we are pleased to note the positive measures being pursued in New Caledonia by the French authorities. The Forum has urged all parties involved to maintain their dialogue and to continue promoting a framework for the peaceful evolution of New Caledonia towards an act of self-determination consistent with the principles and practices of the United Nations.

The prestige and the structure of the United Nations are now reaching new heights. Accordingly, the objectives of the Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism are clearly within our reach. Therefore, the Forum believes that a visit to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories by the Secretary-General, or a specially designated representative of the Secretary-General, could help facilitate the completion of the decolonization process.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

Like others, countries of the South Pacific cheered the release from prison of Mr. Nelson Mandela. We have also called upon those who currently govern South Africa to take further steps that would signal a commitment to the profound and irreversible changes necessary to accelerate the process of dismantling the apparatus of apartheid and eliminate its effects. Until such time, the Forum has joined others in calling for the continuation of the sanctions already imposed against South Africa and exploring other avenues of bringing a rapid end to the system of apartheid.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

That concludes my statement as Chairman of the South Pacific Forum. I shall now make a few observations on behalf of my own country, Vanuatu.

The recently concluded World Summit for Children was a major diplomatic event of potentially enormous social significance. The initiators and organizers are to be commended. But the true measure of the Summit's success does not lie in the number of words written about the meetings or in the number or perceived importance of the Heads of State or Government who participated in them. Rather, the true measure of the Summit's success will be determined by how rapidly we are able to mobilize the resources necessary to guarantee hope for the children of the world.

Children are often the first victims of war, the first victims of the drug traffic and the most tragic victims of AIDS, malaria and other crippling and fatal diseases. Unfortunately, children are also often the last to realize benefits from new scientific or technological breakthroughs. Let us take this opportunity to change that.

One of the things the nations of the world can do for children, and for everyone else, is to renew our commitment to the rule of law. The recent changes that have swept the entire world from Europe to Africa, to South and Central America, to Asia and to the Pacific demonstrate that there is absolutely no substitute for respect for the rule of law.

Today the attention of the entire world is focused on the Persian Gulf. A larger, militarily more powerful country has invaded and continues to occupy its smaller neighbour. As a result, mankind faces the possibility of yet another war. There will be no winners in such a conflict. There will be only losers. The biggest losers will once again be the children. For many of them, the future will end before it begins.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

The world cannot accept the invasion and attempted annexation of Kuwait. They are acts that defy every accepted norm of international law and offend everyone's sense of decency. The Government of Vanuatu knows of no deed, whether real or imagined, that could conceivably justify the fate that has befallen Kuwait.

We pray that the conflict will be resolved without any further loss of life. However, we know that for this to occur, there must be a remarkable change of course. We harbour no illusions with respect to the difficulties ahead.

The effects of the conflict are already being felt in every corner of the world. Not a single country can escape the consequences of the invasion of Kuwait. Thus, none of us can sit idly by and be spectators. We must attempt to resolve the problem together, or it will consume us all, one by one.

Already the economies of many countries, including our own, have been seriously affected. However, we shall continue to support the principles on which the United Nations is based, for without adherence to those principles there will be nothing but international anarchy. Small countries such as our own would be particularly vulnerable to the appetites of others.

There is no doubt that the invasion of Kuwait is a tragic occurrence. It is tragic for Kuwait; it is tragic for Iraq and for every other country in the region. It is also tragic for the innocent civilians from all countries trapped by circumstances in Kuwait and Iraq.

One encouraging sign is that there has been almost universal condemnation of the invasion and continued occupation. Had the nations of the world spoken with similar clarity earlier after similar invasions, Kuwait might perhaps have been spared the fate it now faces. Now that the international community has spoken so unequivocally on the invasion of Kuwait, perhaps others will pause to rethink their own actions.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

The situation in the Persian Gulf is not the only current regional tragedy. It is merely the one now occupying centre stage. The Palestine issue is today no nearer to being resolved than it was yesterday. Lebanon continues to be a bruised and battered victim of an endless cycle of violence. Liberia has been deeply shaken by a particularly violent civil conflict. East Timor's people continue to be forgotten or ignored by many who now speak forcefully on the Persian Gulf. One can only hope that there will soon be an opportunity for the people of Western Sahara finally to determine their own future.

The potential of a United Nations free of confrontation is highly visible in the progress made towards the settlement of the Cambodia issue. We congratulate the Cambodian parties and encourage them to continue their efforts on behalf of the people of their country, who have suffered so long.

The recently concluded second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was a success, even though it was not possible to fulfil all the very high expectations of those who participated. France, which hosted the meeting, continues to play a positive role in this area. Gradually, progress is being achieved on some of the key issues. Now we must attempt to implement fully the new Plan of Action.

Since its inception, the South Commission, under the chairmanship of the former President of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere, has been diligently analysing the problems faced by developing countries, the strategies adopted for dealing with those problems and the lessons to be drawn from past experiences. The report of the South Commission contains many useful recommendations. Perhaps its greatest value, however, is in its clear statement that responsibility for the development of the South lies in the South and in the hands of the peoples of the South. We fully agree.

(Father Lini, Vanuatu)

In conclusion, I wish to join in commending the excellent work of Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, our Secretary-General. Today we stand on the threshold of a new era in international relations. To the Secretary-General and the other members of the Secretariat we offer our thanks for their tireless efforts in helping to bring us to that threshold. Now it is for us, the Member States, to take the final decisive step which will open the door to new opportunities and close the door on all our old hostilities and antagonisms.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Father Walter H. Lini, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. SIPRASEUTH (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (spoke in Laotian; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I should like to extend to you, Sir, my hearty congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the forty-fifth session. I am confident that under your leadership, and with the assistance of all delegations, the work of the present session will be crowned with success. I should like to congratulate your predecessor, General Garba of Nigeria, who also successfully conducted the debates of the Assembly, at the forty-fourth session.

In addition, I should like to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his dedication to the task of safeguarding the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and the settlement of conflicts in different parts of the world.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the admission of the Principality of Liechtenstein as a full-fledged Member of our Organization and welcomes its delegation among us.

The forty-fifth session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when our world is experiencing important and rapid changes in relations between States and when there are new trends favourable to peace and international security. In the area of disarmament, although the danger of a nuclear war has not been entirely laid to rest, the fact that the Soviet Union and the United States have decided to

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

reduce their strategic weapons by 30 per cent, as well as the agreement on the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles that they concluded earlier, constitutes a significant contribution to the lessening of the danger of such a war. In addition, the convergence of those two countries' views regarding the need to eliminate chemical weapons and halt production of such weapons is likely to give encouragement to the talks under way for the drafting of an international convention on the subject and to speed up its implementation once drafted.

In the political area, the exchange of visits and regular meetings between Heads of State and high-ranking leaders of various countries have without doubt created conditions conducive to better mutual understanding and to the dispelling of mistrust.

The joyous official reunification of Germany today, the efforts exerted by the Soviet Union and the United States to reduce their troops and armaments under the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization respectively and the adoption of collective confidence-building measures in Europe have all contributed to dissipating gradually the old climate of distrust.

In general, my country, like the other countries of the world, desires only to see our world free of nuclear weapons in these last years of this century, to see mankind spared the horrible danger of chemical weapons and to be able at least to have our children and grandchildren live in lasting peace and in a society that respects the independence and sovereignty of others, heeds the right and the interests of others and maintains mutually advantageous bonds of co-operation.

To achieve these aspirations I consider that it is time for the countries possessing considerable military forces to begin serious negotiations to achieve

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

general and complete disarmament under effective international control, disarmament that entails a genuine halting of the arms race, including the arms race in outer space, and the limitation of conventional weapons.

However, relations between States and groups of States have in some cases remained very confused. In certain regions military confrontations are striking features of the present situation that are capable of leading to grave catastrophies for mankind.

In the Persian Gulf, the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq has created a very complex and confused situation that seriously theatens the peace and stability in that region and throughout the world. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is greatly concerned over this situation and feels that the adoption by the Security Council of various resolutions on this subject is highly appropriate action that should make it possible to ease the crisis and resolve it by political means. Of course, people the world over are concerned first and foremost by the situation thus created in the Persian Gulf, but we must not in any case lose sight of the question of Palestine and the situation in Lebanon, which also require speedy settlement. That could not but contribute greatly to promoting peace, stability and co-operation in that region.

The question of Afghanistan is not yet completely resolved. The innocent population of Afghanistan, whether in urban centres or in the countryside, continues every day to be the victim of hostile forces. It is time for all the parties concerned to make efforts together to solve this problem by peaceful means, on the basis of the strict and complete implementation of the Geneva Agreement by the co-signatories and the guarantors of the Agreement.

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

The situation in the Korean peninsula remains difficult and complicated despite the recent meeting between the Prime Ministers of the two parts of the country. The Lao Government fully supports the initiative and the efforts of the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea aimed at that country's peaceful reunification free from any foreign interference.

In South Africa, the release of Nelson Mandela is an important victory for the black population fighting for the complete abolition of apartheid and to make South Africa a united, democratic and non-racial country where the whole population can live in conditions of justice and security. Thus the international community should continue to apply the sanctions against the racist régime until it agrees once and for all to abolish its apartheid policy and decides to negotiate seriously with the African National Congress of South Africa.

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

Likewise, we may hope that, under the auspices of the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Secretary-General, the settlement by peaceful means of the question of Western Sahara can be constructively set in motion.

In South-East Asia peaceful coexistence, the settlement of disputes by political means and economic co-operation are constantly growing stronger and developing. The countries of the region continue to consult together, both formally and informally, and spare no efforts to make that region an area of peace, independence, freedom and neutrality.

The problem of Cambodia is one of the chief subjects occupying the attention of international public opinion. At present, every one agrees that this problem must be resolved by political means. The process of the settlement of the Cambodian problem is moving forward constructively. The Tokyo Declaration of 5 June 1990 by Mr. Hun Sen, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the State of Cambodia, and Prince Sihanouk is an important step in that process and has received full approval from world public opinion. The recent meeting at Jakarta among the different Cambodian parties and the subsequent Security Council resolution 668 (1990) have marked another no less important stage in the process of the comprehensive settlement of the problem by political means, for they are in keeping with the real situation in Cambodia at the present time. The Lao Government whole-heartedly supports the decision of the Supreme National Council of Cambodia to send its delegation to this session of the General Assembly in order to represent the independence, sovereignty and unity of Cambodia in the international arena.

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

On the subject of the present situation in our country, the Lao Government has, for some time now, adopted a new policy aimed at expanding our economic co-operation with other countries. To ensure success in the implementation of this new economic policy, we have enacted several laws, such as the Investment Code, the Criminal Code and the Civil Code. In addition, we have prepared a draft of the first constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. That draft is now being discussed by the different sectors of the population and will finally be placed before the Supreme People's Assembly for consideration and approval.

In general, the economic situation has become more dynamic than before. The market has expanded, and the production of goods has been developed, thus making it possible gradually to improve the living conditions of our country's multi-ethnic population. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic considers it essential to continue to pursue an outward-looking, market-oriented policy. To do so, it hopes to enjoy the support and co-operation of friendly countries and international organizations.

The relations of the Lao People's Democratic Republic with neighbouring countries are generally good. There have been positive developments in Lao-Thai relations. The two countries continue to exchange visits and to hold consultations at different levels, among them that of the two highest-ranking representatives of our national armies. In addition, economic and cultural co-operation between our two countries is developing in a spirit of good-neighourliness and brotherhood.

However, a number of problems remain unresolved, particularly the border dispute in the area of Botène in the Lao Province of Sayabouri and Phitsanoulok in Thailand. On the Lao side, we have put forward several proposals and will do our utmost to resolve the problem jointly, expeditiously and definitively. That would

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

make an important contribution to strengthening relations between Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Apart from the question of war and armed conflicts in different regions, other problems are subjects of concern for the international community. I should mention at this point the problem of drugs, which constitutes a long-term danger to mankind unless we can find a solution in time. Above all, we must abandon the old idea that the principal cause of the drug problem is solely drug production. In reality, demand is also an important and inherent factor. Hence the fight against illicit drug trafficking as a result is a matter for collective responsibility and requires international co-operation, with regard not only to punishment but also to financial assistance to developing countries in their efforts to develop substitute crops in the form of the programme of integrated rural development. Furthermore, in order to be effective, such co-operation should be constructive and should be carried out with full respect for the sovereignty and the traditional features of the beneficiary countries. It is in that spirit that the Lao People's Democratic Republic has been co-operating with the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control and the Government of the United States in the implementation of programmes to substitute other crops for the opium poppy in mountain areas. Our Government is ready to co-operate with all countries and international organizations to that end.

Although at present, with the exception of the Persian Gulf crisis, there is general détente in the political sphere throughout the world, the world economy is still in a difficult and complex situation. Over the last 10 years, the inequality in economic growth between developed and developing countries has grown worse, and the gap separating the two groups is becoming ever wider. Most developing countries continue to face an unfavourable situation. The prices of raw

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

materials - their main export products - remain very low, and deteriorating terms of trade and high real interest rates have meant a constant increase in their external debt to such a point that they can no longer repay it. In addition, their export products are constantly blocked by the protectionist measures of the developed countries. What is more, some developed countries continue to impose coercive political, economic and other measures such as blockades, embargoes and restrictive trade measures against certain developing countries.

This situation compounds the unsatisfactory results obtained in the implementation of the new Substantial Programme of Action for the least developed countries and has made the economic situation of those countries increasingly critical.

We feel that insasmuch as international political relations have undergone a change for the better, the present system of international economic relations should also be restructured, both in form and in principle. With regard to the least developed countries, we hope that the Programme of Action adopted by the second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held at Paris last September will be seriously implemented and that there will be no political pre-conditions for granting aid to them.

(Mr. Sipraseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

The characteristic feature of our present-day, evolving world can only be one of mutual assistance and interdependence between the developing and the developed countries. Therefore just and mutually advantageous international co-operation has become more than ever imperative. The fact that we meet here each year affords us all a valuable opportunity to consult among ourselves and jointly to seek a way of making multilateral international co-operation more effective. In multilateral co-operation the United Nations is the Organization best suited for playing a central role. We must therefore strive to increase the effectiveness of our Organization in dealing with the problem of ensuring peace, security and international co-operation, in order to respond to the aspirations of mankind as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations, to which all Member States have subscribed.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.